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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 3, 2003

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**EYE DOCTOR SENTENCED TO 33 MONTHS IN JAIL
FOR MEDICARE FRAUD INVOLVING ADULT AND NURSING HOME RESIDENTS**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that Dr. SHAUL DEBBI, an ophthalmologist, was sentenced today by United States District Judge JED S. RAKOFF in Manhattan federal court to 33 months in prison, and ordered to pay \$885,030 in restitution, on Medicare fraud charges

According to the Superseding Indictment, DEBBI's claims were false and fraudulent based on DEBBI's billing: (1) for medically unnecessary exams and procedures; (2) for procedures which were never performed; (3) for routine eye exams that were not reimbursable; (4) for services he claimed were provided in DEBBI's home office when they were not; (5) for procedures that reflected false diagnostic codes; and (6) for medical services he claimed to have provided when he had not.

DEBBI pled guilty on May 19, 2003, to two schemes to defraud Medicare, one from 1998 through 2001 and the other from

2000 to 2001. As part of his plea, DEBBI surrendered his medical license.

At sentencing, Judge RAKOFF described DEBBI's crime as "a fraud extending over a lengthy period of time that defrauded the government under any analysis of hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more." He also noted that DEBBI's crime "calls out for the significant deterrence effect of prison time" and thus "requires meaningful prison time."

Judge RAKOFF also stated that DEBBI's fraud was "particularly difficult to detect" because the fraud involved "elderly and often mentally disabled persons." Judge Rakoff concluded that "the public on the whole has been well served by the disclosures that occurred through investigative reporting and then through the investigation by the government."

According to the Complaint and Superseding Indictment, a significant portion of DEBBI's practice consisted of treating patients in adult homes and nursing homes. These adult homes are long-term residential facilities whose residents suffer from various disabilities, including various mental and emotional disabilities. As charged in the Superseding Indictment, the targets of DEBBI's two illegal schemes included patients covered by the Medicare program, which provides medical benefits to persons 65 or older and certain persons with disabilities.

The Superseding Indictment also alleges that, from 1998

through 2001, DEBBI submitted false and misleading claims to Medicare for ophthalmological services he purportedly provided to residents of adult homes. In addition, it was charged that, from the summer of 2000 through 2001, DEBBI arranged for a physician's assistant he employed to examine residents in adult homes without his being present. DEBBI subsequently submitted false and misleading claims to Medicare for ophthalmological services the physician's assistant purportedly provided to adult homes residents.

DEBBI, 49, lives in Great Neck, New York.

Mr. COMEY praised the investigative efforts of the FBI and the assistance of the Office of Professional Medical Conduct of the New York State Department of Health.

Assistant United States Attorneys PAUL B. RADVANY and DANIEL S. RUZUMNA are in charge of the prosecution.

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